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PURCHASING POWER OF POLISH WORKER  
FAR BELOW PREWAR

Two years ago it cost 10 zlotys to send a letter from Poland to a foreign country; today it costs 35 zlotys. The cost of sending a similar letter in Germany is 30 pfennigs. This means that a zloty is worth less than a pfennig. Bank-note circulation is constantly increasing and so are prices. Wages are increasing, but not in proportion to the prices of commodities. On every occasion, the Polish press emphasizes the fact that conditions have improved over the period prior to September 1939. However, one thing is never mentioned -- the true value of the prewar zloty, which was hard currency.

Taking 1938 as one, the official price index is 250, and for some articles like footwear it even reaches 400. This means that the prewar zloty was worth approximately 250 present zlotys, or that the present zloty is 0.4 of the prewar zloty -- less than half the prewar grosz. In the meantime, the wage index for laborers is only 100, and for office workers 50. A laborer actually receives 2½ times less than before the war and an office worker 5 times less. A worker earning 10,000 zlotys per month receives in purchasing power the equivalent of 40 prewar zlotys; and an office employee earning 20,000 zlotys receives 80 prewar zlotys -- provided they do not purchase any footwear.

An employee earning 20,000 zlotys per month spends almost his entire monthly earnings for a suit of clothing and almost one half his month's earnings for a pair of shoes. Since everything has to be purchased on the free market, an average worker's pay is only sufficient to cover cheap housing and a meager supply of food.

Fuel is also very expensive. Many people sell some of their clothing to obtain fuel. In localities near Slask, a ton of coke costs over 5,500 zlotys.

It must be admitted, however, that there are exceptions. Workers who are record breakers earn up to 100,000 zlotys, but their ranks are small. The life expectancy of these outstanding workers is short and many become invalids because of excessive strain. Living conditions have also improved for Party dignitaries; their incomes, however, are closely guarded.

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